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EDITORIAL

To see a watch-repairer take down a watch for the purpose of cleaning it is to comprehend, perhaps for the first time, the basic principle of a watch. When the main-spring is wound up it becomes a little power-potential seeking to escape. If allowed to escape without check there would be a violent little buzz of about one-tenth of a second duration, and the watch would be run down. But the whole purpose of the escape-lever, the balance wheel, the train of gears is to so reduce and control the rate of this escape of power that it will take at least twenty-four hours, nearer thirty, for the watch to run down. This reduced rate of escape is communicated to the three hands on the dial: to the second hand so that it will take exactly sixty seconds to make one complete revolution; to the minute hand so that it will take exactly sixty minutes to make its complete revolution; and to the hour hand so that it will require twenty-four hours to make its two complete revolutions of A. M. and P. M. If we feel any interest, all this is interesting to know; but once is enough. We do not recall all this mechanical pedantry every time we look at the watch. We take it at its face value, a watch, my watch. I wear it, consult it, calculate the day's activities according to its advices, trust it, and love it. Good old watch. It has served me all my grown-up life, as it served my father before me, as perhaps it will serve my son after me. What more is there to say?

Christmas resembles the watch: it is a complete spiritual organism in itself. It has a power-potential great enough to influence our words and actions, and this potential derives from some potent group of memories and associations. It also has an escapement-device that prolongs this influence all through Advent and up to Twelfth Night. Moreover, it has its long train of gears that explain its origin and function gathered from all over the world, and from the days of primitive Nature Worship down to the present. Must we rehearse all these details of its composition every time it comes? Once is enough. Remember: the moment we take the watch apart it stops ticking; the moment we begin to botanize Christmas it stops being Christmas and becomes an antiquarian curiosity. We know all about the sun climbing back again into the sky and bringing its promise of another spring. We have been sufficiently reminded that the Christmas tree, the Yule Log, the Wassail, the blazing plum pudding, and the rest of its pagan accessories have nothing to do with the Stable in Bethlehem. But what of it? Christmas is not what it has been, it is what it is now. The only way to take it is at its face value—our annual sample of human life at its best. It will last but a few days, so make the best of it for what it means now. It may have derived from many sources; but now it stands for the birth of Jesus whose manhood is our standard; whose loyalty to the will of God is the brightest light of our age, our guide and our promise of victory.

"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." They were too intimate to be discussed, or even revealed to others. The best and most searching thoughts that Christmas brings are those that are kept and pondered in the heart. Nobody knows just what they are. Nobody wants to know. Everybody has that sacred little store in the heart, and everybody knows that everybody else has it; and that it is just as sacred to its owner as his own is to him. It is one of the quieter ways in which Christmas makes the whole world kin: through mutual understanding, and sympathy, and respect, without a word spoken.

"This shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." The whole virtue of the sign is in the second clause. There was nothing distinctive about being wrapped in swaddling clothes. They might find a dozen new-born babes, and they would all be wrapped in swaddling clothes. But the one lying in a manger, the humblest one of them all, would be the one they sought. Christmas is entirely and beautifully democratic. Earth's social ratings and protocols mean nothing to God. A soul is a soul, whether in rags or in purple; purity is purity, whether in the nobleman or the churl. Christmas is not a class property.

C. E. P.

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IN A LOWLY MANGER

Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath have I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.

Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion: put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem. Break forth into joy; sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people.

PRAYER

O Thou, whose gift in the new-born Christ is the Spirit of Community with one another and with Thee, this day we would gladden our eyes with the light of the Star that still but dimly shines; we would rejoice our ears with the music of a long-lost angel song. We are not as if Thou hadst never been, but we are still as the voice of one that crieth: Prepare ye, in the wilderness, the Way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

O Thou Star of Hope, Thou art our only peace. Not in what we have thus far done do we find rest, not in our desertion of the struggle, not in our withdrawal from the world to a place apart. The only peace we know is the peace of Him who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. We seek from Thee the peace that rests upon the faces of those who, in the darkness, are turned toward the dawn that shall not fail.

O Thou Spirit of Community, be Thou our Star of Hope. Not upon the seas that separate is our desire set, nor on the walls that divide us from one another. From every self-centered impulse we would be delivered this day. Strengthen within us the bond that binds each man to his fellow. Write upon the heart of each the law that is common to every heart. Join each to each, and each to all by the rule of mutual love. For unto us a Child is born, and unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders.

Strengthen this day the authority of good-will. Kindle everywhere the fires of fellowship, and the cause of co-operation for the common good.

In our unshaken faith that Thou didst make us one in Thee, we would rise above the ruins of our failures, confident that some future day shall heed the song which now the angels sing. By the power of Thine everlasting grace, so let it be.

Amen

R. G. S.

ADVENT

"And thou, Child, shalt be called the Son of the Highest, Counsellor, Prince of Peace." What a frail thing is a baby! How easily this bundle of potentialities is blighted! A moment of neglect, a cold draught, unwholesome food, and the tender promise of great things has slipped away.

So love comes into our lives, not through logic, nor by reason heralded with trumpets, but as a frail babe, the wistful promptings of great things to be. Love must ever grow in lowly things—the Infinite fusing with the finite, a blending of joy and sorrow, a bursting seed-pod wafted from eternal ways down the streets of time.

Lowly kneeling at the foot of the manger, we invite you this day, not to a crusade, but to a sweet ministry of nursing the heart-hunger of all men in every clime and race, that love may grow into manhood and, by its gentle sway, guide the destinies of groping humanity.

W. W. A.

A LEGEND OF THE CHRIST CHILD

Between the oak trees and the elms
  And moaning poplars tall,
A Child came wandering down the street,
  A strange, sweet Child, and small,
And warm light like a blossom lay
  Where'er his feet might fall.

Chill stars that crowded ebon sky
  Burnt bright as beaten gold;
Stark frost about his pathway lay,
  Yet was the Child not cold.
His round sweet arms on either side,
  He seem-ed wide to hold.

And as he stepped amid the glooms
  By darkened houses cast,
Each sleeping babe that cradled lay
  Dreamed of a splendor vast;
Each man, though care-worn, blind, and dull,
  Smiled as the Christ Child passed.

The wailing wind heaped drifted snow
  His lonely feet across.
Yet in his shining eyes there dwelt
  No hint of fear or loss,
Although his wide-spread arms outlimned
  The shadow of a cross.

CHRISTMAS UNDER PALM TREE AND VINE

Amos B. Horlacher

What does Christmas mean to you—snow-covered fields under a star-filled sky—a family gathering around a friendly hearth with a Christmas tree ablaze with light? Does it mean "sleigh bells in the snow" as a popular song has it? For millions of us living in northern latitudes these and other things so well remembered and eagerly anticipated when winter first sets in, are at least the outward concommitants of Christmas. They appear on our Christmas cards and are reflected in our songs. They give to the magical word "Christmas" a setting and a spirit unlike any other holiday in the entire year. This surely is what the poet meant when he spoke of "Christmas under fir tree and pine."

But Christmas is a universal holiday and so the poet spoke quite justly when he said: "Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas tonight"—even in the Solomon Islands in the "winter" of 1943!

In that "winter" with the temperature ranging each day between one hundred ten and one hundred twenty degrees, I looked at my church calendar and found that the Scripture and prayers appointed for the first Sunday in December began the season of Advent. Christmas was drawing near; but only the printed page declared it. There was no chill in the air, no early darkness to herald the approach of the winter solstice, no pine tree standing alone in a windswept field with its branches bent under a burden of snow—only swaying palms on the island beach responding gracefully to an occasional breeze from the sea. And going down to the water's edge there was here and there a carpet of reddish purple bougainvillaea.

And everywhere on this torrid island were the harsh instruments of war—guns placed in revetments on the beach, death-dealing aircraft carefully concealed under palm branches, bombs and shells distributed in small armories to escape detection from the sky—and in the harbor, warships ready at a moment's notice to attack or flee as the fortunes of war would dictate. Overhead hung the Southern Cross where we looked for the familiar bear. Even the sky was alien as we thought and dreamed of home.

Where others had looked and listened for angel voices, our eyes searched for diving planes marked with the red ball of the rising sun. Many of our nights were sleepless as death came from the sky. To wait a second too long in answering the siren's call to take cover was often fatal.

"Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas tonight!"

The foregoing is what I remember of the early December days on the Island of Vella La Vella in the year of our Lord, 1943. Perhaps in the news dispatches of the time you never heard of this little island for even on large maps of the world it appears as little more than a pinpoint in an archipelago of islands which are called the Solomons. No great victories were won there. Its name will not live in the annals of our history as will Guadalcanal, Tarawa, or Iwo Jima, for it was a mere stepping stone to bigger things in the Pacific War. But do not think, therefore, that it was of little consequence, for there on that little island on a coral point which juts into the sea, begirt with waving palms, I said the last hopeful words over the body of many an American Sailor and Marine and not a few of New Zealand's finest sons. There in that island, for more than a hundred days—and they just before Christmas of 1943—we established a firm beachhead that led to Bougainville, Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima, and ultimately to the shores of imperial Japan.

My days—and nights—were too busy to think very much about the celebration of Christmas other than appropriate religious services. But soon I was relieved of even that responsibility, for I was flown out to Guadalcanal hospital as a casualty and it was there that I spent Christmas day. So far as I can recall it differed from no other day. It was sweltering hot, not a breath of air moved the palms and the war went on. But I recall with great clarity and depth of feeling the sound of taps on Christmas Eve. Our hospital—known in the Navy as "Mob Eight"—was situated in a coconut grove not far from the island cemetery. Each night precisely at ten o'clock a Marine bugler sounded taps over the dead who had fallen in this first great offensive battle in the Pacific. Each night his solemn notes of silver closed our day with a kind of reverent quiet, but somehow on Christmas eve all this became deeply moving and personal to me. As I lay in my bunk in the dark I prayed that God would send his peace—which the world can neither give nor take away—to the grieving and lonely hearts in America who were turned this night to the place where the lone bugler stood.

The Christmas of 1944 was very different. I was attached to Naval Base Hospital Number Six on the main island of the Espiritu Santo group. The war had moved far away from our island and we were enjoying many of the "com-

forts of home." Navy nurses had come out from the States and Red Cross women were there to assist our men with occupational therapy. Many men came to us grievously wounded but they received excellent medical care and in a few weeks they were on transports returning to "Uncle Sugar." So if there can be a happy and pleasant place in the midst of war—Base Six was that.

As Christmas approached I held planning meetings with the staff including nurses, doctors, and Red Cross workers. We could not reproduce Christmas in New England or North Dakota but we could and did do our best to make it a real Christmas. But I had some misgivings. In a letter to a friend, dated December 5, 1944, I wrote:

"Dear George:

Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas tonight,
Christmas in lands of the fir tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm tree and vine.

Tomorrow being the first Sunday in Advent we shall sing some Christmas songs in chapel. I intend to preach on the subject: *Christmas in the Heart,* to emphasize the obvious truth that despite the fact that we shall be deprived of all the outward circumstance of our remembered Christmases at home—snow in the woods, the rich smell of the fir tree in the living room, holly wreaths in windows ablaze with light, the exchange of presents and greeting cards, the warmth of the family circle, little children playing with their new toys on the floor while older boys and girls go out into the winter's snow with their new sleds, an afternoon visit to the homes of friends and kinfolks—all this must be absent from our Christmas. Yet for all that, we are reduced by necessity to enter into a deeper understanding and appreciation of what Christmas really means. Christmas we shall really have under palm tree and vine, but only the warm heart and the understanding mind can make it so."

And it was so!

Beginning soon after Thanksgiving—this time with roast turkey and all the fixings—the Red Cross huts were busy making decorations for the wards. Men searched the surrounding jungle for anything that looked like, or could be made to look like, a pine or fir tree. They even made a kind of tinsel by cutting up and stringing together wrappings from cigarettes. Our Christmas eve parties were held in all the wards and Santa Claus visited with his bag of presents. Just after midnight all patients who were ambulatory and most of the staff gathered in the open air movie enclosure where we greeted Christmas day by singing the well remembered carols of our youth. Then followed the reading of the Christmas story from Luke, prayer for those at home, a brief Christmas message from the chaplain. *Joy to the World* was sung and at its conclusion, each one greeted the other with a cheerful "Merry Christmas."

On Christmas day the hospital went on standby routine. We had field and track meets and a baseball game between teams of officers and enlisted personnel. In such contests the officers usually take a drubbing and this day was no exception. But anything can be overlooked on Christmas and besides there was a fine Christmas dinner awaiting our return to the hospital.

In the afternoon of Christmas day we held a ceremony for the presentation of medals to patients. A letter written to a friend about that time describes better than I could now recall my thoughts on that occasion.

"Dear Saul,

". . . You have heard of the Purple Heart Award, have you not? It is the one medal that is awarded through the medical command in the Navy. This award was originated by George Washington for wounds received as a result of enemy action. For many years following the Civil War it fell in disuse. In the last war it was revived and is now awarded as a bronze heart-shaped medal with a silver image of G. Washington applied or embossed on a background of purple enamel. The medal is suspended on a purple and white silk ribbon. On its reverse side are the words, 'For Military Merit.'

"Since we are a Naval Hospital receiving both Naval and Marine casualties, our share of the grievously wounded from the Marianas and Palau campaigns was very considerable since they are almost entirely Naval and Marine operations. Nearly all of these wounded men are now ambulatory and so it becomes possible to award them the Purple Heart. This is how it is done.

"The time is mid-afternoon on the parade ground. The recipients are seated on a bench or are in wheel chairs on the east side of the field. Back on the hospital compound, a naval band lines up in formation and marches toward the field. Then follow the officers and nurses in the uniform of the day. They in white, we in khaki. Several hundred corpsmen all in white march behind us with an officer in charge of squads of fifty men.

"As we march to the field led by the flagbearer and the band playing the Stars and Stripes Forever, we officers and nurses line up in two columns behind the recipients. We remain at attention while the enlisted personnel circle the parade grounds. When finally they are lined up in formation facing the recipients and the officers, the band ends its music and all is quiet for the moment.

"Then the Skipper, or another officer designated to present the medal, is handed the award by a yeoman and proceeds to pin it on the breast of the recipient just over his heart. As he does this the entire assembly comes from parade rest to rigid attention. The medal pinned on, the Skipper offers his hand and a word of congratulation. They shake hands. The marine takes a step back, salutes, and has his salute returned. He then turns smartly around in the approved military way, retraces exactly the course he took upon coming up. When he reaches his seat the names, 'Shemansky, Stanley, Corporal USMC; Kelley, James Joseph, Fireman First Class USNR; Cohen, Isaac, Pharmacist Mate Third Class, USNR'—and so on through forty names—white and colored—through the whole league of nations that is America. In some cases patients unable to walk, and some may never walk again, are wheeled to the center by a nurse. In other cases they cannot salute for there is no arm, or it is in a heavy cast and cannot be raised to the forehead.

"As I watch them I think back weeks and sometimes months to the days when these men were brought on stretchers—in the rain and half dead. There goes Black, Henry C., Pvt. FC. USMCR. He is very thin and a little bent towards his left side. Ah, Private Black, how Dr. McRae worked over the wound in your left lung and how despairing of your life he was that first night when I came to your bedside. I came and gave you the Holy Communion. You were afraid and you wanted to go home. You were afraid, too, when you hit the beach at Saipan, but you went knowing that whatever happened, your great country would look out for you and your loved ones. Now, Buddy, you look into the unknown and are afraid again. I repeat the words: 'This is my body which is broken for you.' Whose body broken for whom? Yes, Christ's for you, Black, and me, but surely there is something more here. Before me lies a Marine —perhaps dying—whose body was broken for me. It is a sobering thought. Well, you got through that first night, Mate, and after weeks of careful nursing, here you are walking up to receive a decoration for 'Military Merit.' Well, Skipper, you can say that again!

"One after another they march, hobble on crutches, or are wheeled up. Each is a personality to me. I remember each wound, my conversations with each man, the state he comes from, stories about his wife and kids, his girl or Mom. Soon most of them will be home in the security of our homeland. Some will never fight again. All of them saw their closest buddies die. Remember these men. They are what makes us a great nation.

"I called them men—and they are. But rarely are they older than 22 with almost 3 years in the service. And don't think of them as big, strapping fellows. Some such there are, but most were little guys from the cities, villages, and farms over the broad expanse of the nation. I can assure you that I as an officer in the Navy, was proud to stand at attention in the hot tropical sun while this private, corporal, sergeant, seaman, or pharmacist mate received recognition from the nation he served so well.

"Most of the recipients were Marines and at the close of the ceremony when the enlisted men marched in review, I was deeply touched as the band played softly—as in reverence for the wounded who lie in the graves of Saipan, Timan, Guam, and Pelileu, the strains of the Marine song:

'In the halls of Montezuma
On the shores of Tripoli . . .'

No motto was ever more apt or true of any group than theirs—'Semper Fidelis.'

"As the marching company returned to position the Skipper marched alone from the field; then the whole assembly in reverse order from their coming marched out as the band struck up in lively tune 'Anchors Aweigh.' For while there were many Marines, there were also sailors who manned their landing boats and Navy corpsmen who risked their lives to rescue and attend the fallen Marines. These, too, have upheld a proud tradition which even as I write is adding a new and bright page to American Naval greatness under Admirals Halsey and Kinkaid in the waters of the Zulu Sea.

"I have written this detail not so much to tell of a military event as to reflect an attitude. If ever in later years I begin to reflect a lack of confidence in America, or the common people—the ordinary guy on the city streets or the 'country hick'—I'd like you to remind me of the substance of this letter."

So Christmas of 1944 had come and gone. It was in truth a different Christmas than any I had known under "fir tree and pine," but it was Christmas nonetheless for the poet was right when he wrote:

"Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas tonight."

The time draws near for the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallowed ground.

SOMETHING MAGNIFICENT
Is Taking Place in the World

Frederick R. Griffin

There are certain persons and events in human history which have long been uppermost in religious thought and faith. For multitudes of people these persons and events have been and still are the indispensable and the indestructible foundations of religion. Belief in them is regarded as the heart of their religion. Set forth in chronological order and in the form in which they are believed, the most important are as follows.

For the government and conduct of man, God, the Sovereign Lord of the World, revealed his will and law through Moses, the leader and liberator of his people. After the flight from Egypt, Moses was called to the Mount of Sinai and there was given the ten commandments. This was a special revelation of God to man.

Among the Hebrew people there arose from time to time prophets, men of heroic mold, of vision, courage and wisdom. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos and others were God-fearing religious leaders and social reformers. The mighty words which they spoke for the redemption of their people were from their God. The prophets were messengers who whole-heartedly accepted what they were commissioned to deliver. They were inspired, which means that the light of heaven was transmitted through them.

In Bethlehem of Judea a child was born. The story of his birth is the most beautiful story which has ever been told, and after nineteen centuries and more it remains unequalled. This child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. When grown to manhood his mission was revealed. He was the son of God and was sent into the world to save and to serve the people of the world, and this was accomplished and continues to be accomplished whenever and wherever people believe in him. The credentials of his divine appointment and his authority were his conception by the Holy Spirit and the power to do marvelous things: to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to cause the lame to walk, and to restore troubled minds to normal health. After two or three years of beneficent living and of teachings which are still the hope of the world, he was cruelly tortured and put to death, chiefly because he said that God was his father.

Death is the absolute finality. It is the unconditional end. But he did not die. The resurrection is variously understood, but for our purpose in this brief summary of persons and events which have long been central in religious thought and faith, it is enough to say that believers have affirmed that the death of his mortal body was not the end of his life.

There are other subjects which might be added such as the Apostle Paul, the historic creeds, saints and martyrs and the Church, all of which have a more or less important place in the thought and faith of the believer. They are not included at this time because they proceed from the subjects already mentioned and are dependent upon them; that is, there would not have been an Apostle Paul or historic creeds or Christian saints and martyrs and Christian Church if there had not been commandments and prophets and the birth and the events in the life of Jesus. It is the latter which are supremely important and the essential heart of Christian faith. Traditionally and unto this day generally each and every one of these essential persons and events is believed to have been unique in time and character and worth. Their significance lies in the fact that each one is unparalleled and the only one of its kind and supernaturally ordained.

But there is another way of thinking about these essential subjects, these persons and events, and this, that they are representative of something magnificent which is taking place in our world. Unique they are because nature, which abhors a vacuum, abhors also duplicates and identities. Uniqueness is the universal rule but the unique may be representative, and these which we are considering appear to be representative of something surpassingly wonderful which is taking place in the world.

If "magnificent" and "surpassingly wonderful" seem to be irresponsible and extravagant words, then consider these things. The world is very old and here there has been life—animal life and life of our primate and human ancestors—for millions of years. Try to think what life was like during all that time and try to imagine how it was possible that right here on this planet there could have been such persons and events as religious thought cherishes—and rightly—as its hope and faith. The general character of life on the earth is known through the findings of biologists, anthropologists and archeologists and, thinking of it, it might seem highly incredible that there could have been these persons and events—so unlike anything in the hundreds of thousands of years before them were they that they seemed to have been not of this world. But they were of this world and they are the evidences of something momentous which is hap-

pening here and they are representative of it. Think carefully and seriously of this because it is of the highest significance.

Moses came down from Sinai with the decalogue, a revolutionary event in human history since it was revealed or discovered or made known by Moses or somebody and in some place or manner that man could not live as his ancestors for ages had lived as the beasts of the field and of the jungle. Instinct and brute force had been the sole rule of life. Then came the revelation that beyond instinct and brute strength are laws of justice, co-operation and respect for the rights of others. Something came to Moses or the discerning of his age and it has been coming ever since with more and more urgency and authority. "Two things fill me with awe," said the philosopher, "the starry heavens above and the moral law within." We do not steal or bear false witness because Moses so wrote but because of the testimony of the soul within. The experience of Moses was unique but it was representative of that which is taking place in the world! the coming of moral sovereignty in the society of man.

The Hebrew prophets and their words remain in the treasury of a rich tradition but they do not remain as solitary witnesses of the incoming and the outgoing light of the truth which sets us free from ignorance, folly, selfishness and mutual destruction. The Hebrew prophets have had many successors. They are found among poets and teachers and scientists, public servants, statesmen and followers of other vocations who are channels of revelation, channels because of the insight, courage and vision which show the way forward to man's noble destiny. Revelation is not finished and sealed but is continuous. For millions of years there was no revelation as we understand the meaning of that word and then, beginning such a little time back, it came as it has been coming ever since. The Hebrew prophets were representative of something which is taking place in our world.

Children have come into the world for unnumbered ages and, whenever any thought has been given to the subject, they have been regarded as the offspring of the flesh. Then a child was born of whom it is written that he was conceived by the holy spirit. Yes, a hundred times yes, we believe that the spirit of God was in him. Since he was born there have been many children born who were welcomed as the gift of God, as having the holy spirit of God in them, and as having three parents: a father, a mother and the heavenly source of all. The birth of Jesus marked the beginning of a new understanding of human life and a new understanding of the way in which God comes into human lives. The birth of Jesus was unique and it was also representative.

Jesus was the son of God and was sent into the world to serve and to save. Again we say yes, a hundred times yes, he was that. Once a blasphemous claim, but slowly the truth has dawned that in essence and in promise and capability, we are all children of God and that the high mission of every man, whatever his vocation or talents, is to serve and to save. We are learning what was long ago taught, that he who loseth his life for others shall find it, and learned also what scripture teaches in the words: "Now are we the sons of God." Jesus was unique and also representative of something magnificent which is taking place here. His credentials were his powers of healing and restoring. If his acts were called miracles, then think of the mounting miracles in our own day: miracles of medicine and surgery, miracles of love and patience and faith. Consider the transfusion of blood to save life, and consider also the transfusion of courage and hope. The teachings of the parables and the sermon on the mount were neglected for centuries and even now are considered Utopian by many, and yet something is happening which is affirming that these teachings point the sure way to peace and happiness and the emergence of man from the sovereignty of the jungle. Jesus' credentials were the credentials of every son of God who is responding to this new and oncoming something which is magnificent.

He was crucified, dead and buried and then he rose from the dead. It is impossible to doubt that because he continues to live exactly where he surely wished to live; in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere who keep his commandments and who find in him the life, the truth and the way. He is alive now. There are hosts of people who are said to have died and yet who live and surround us all the time. We do not see their faces or hear their voices but they are now present in all the good the past hath had and who make our own time glad. If we had the gift to do it and could analyze the traditions, ideals, principles, customs, institutions, the faith and the vision which make all the difference between barbarism and civilization, we would find that they are not abstractions but are living people. The best in our day is a great assembly or society of people who died in their mortal bodies but have risen from the dead.

Here, then, too briefly noted, are essential persons and events which are indispensable to religious faith and all of them are representative of the magnificent which is taking place in our world. What is it that is thus taking place? It is the coming of moral order, of continuously new revelations, of how man must live, of the

daring faith that we are in promise and capability sons of God, of the authentic credentials of character and service and of the assurance that we live beyond death in the kind of world we have helped to create and the transformation of the kingdoms of instinct, jungle and cave into the kingdom of mutual aid, dignity and nobility. It is the coming of a new conception of life, of man and of God, an amazing conception, observing which we can sing with wonder: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

NEW LIGHT FROM OLD SCROLLS

Henry J. Cadbury

To those of us who have been following—even from afar—the disclosures from the Dead Sea area in the last seven years the present public interest is an encouraging and a humiliating experience. It is humiliating because it indicates that what scholarship has recognized as one of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times has only reached the general public in America belatedly, with the help of a professional popular writer and an even more popular magazine. Edmund Wilson's article in the May 14 *New Yorker* deserves the credit for finally breaking through the sound barrier and reaching the general public. It is now available, with slight alteration but without the distracting context of advertising columns, in a small book published by the Oxford University Press in New York. The situation is encouraging to the Biblical scholar because it shows an underlying deep interest among the laity in the history of our religious heritage. But the interest is not all well informed or well motivated. The hope or the fear that some of the cherished ideas about this heritage will be disturbed by the discoveries plays too large a part for the interest to be purely objective. For that reason an attempt to summarize briefly the bearings of these finds may be in order.

The interest in the episode is various, and may be divided under several heads. First of all there is the sheer romance of the discovery. Irrespective of the special contents of the finds, the way they have come to light at a time and place that one would least expect and by a slow succession of processes—and the end is not yet—is worthy of a detective or murder novel or any purely fictitious thriller. To put it mildly "truth is stranger than fiction." Here is the story in a nutshell:

A settlement of a communitarian Jewish sect was living in the days of Jesus near the wild and barren western shore of the Dead Sea. They were not many miles from Jericho and, while Herod the Great was their neighbor there, they abandoned this residence and found refuge elsewhere, perhaps at Damascus. But as in the story of the Holy Family, after his death and Archelaus' accession the refugees returned and continued until the legions of Titus about the year 68 A.D. scourged the Jericho neighborhood and finally captured both Jericho and Jerusalem. Their vacated buildings, now called Khirbet Qumran, were then used afterwards in turn by the Roman soldiers and those of Barcochba, but never reoccupied. They consisted of a large block of masonry rooms and courts guarded by a tower and included reservoirs for water, and besides kitchen and other utilities several large common rooms for eating, for worship, and for study and writing. There was a complete pottery factory also. Near this community center were caves, some of them habitable, in which at their departure they hid hundreds of their books, chiefly leather scrolls written in Hebrew. Probably a considerable village of tents for other residents was there also; and sloping down toward the sea a cemetery with over a thousand graves, in rows, of men, women and children.

The Roman Pliny, who himself perished shortly after this community in a different disaster, the eruption of Vesuvius, knew this settlement whose location and rules of life he described in detail. The Essenes, as he calls them, are also described by two Jewish writers of the same century without exactly locating their habitat. Philo, the earlier writer, calls them Therapeutae. Josephus claims to have once been a probationary member of a group of Essenes.

In the third century Origen, the Christian scholar, tells of the finding of some Old Testament Greek manuscripts in a jar in or near Jericho. Some of those left behind at Qumran were also in jars but apparently none written in Greek. Another account centuries later tells of the finding of a number of copies of the Old Testament and other books in Hebrew in a cave near the Dead Sea. Whether the cave was one of those lately found this account written by the Nestorian Patriarch Timotheus about 800 A.D. hardly shows. The account has, however, one curious parallel. "A bedouin's dog went after a sheep through a hole and failed to return. When the bedouin went to investigate he

found himself in a cave containing a number of manuscripts." From later Arabic sources we hear of a "cave sect" of Jews so called because their books were discovered in a cave. The reporter of this lived in the tenth century and belonged to the Moslem sect of Karaites. Among some Karaite documents found in a Genizah in Cairo half a century ago were fragments of a "Zadokite" work which shows unmistakable connection with some of the books left behind at Qumran. In 1873 a French archaeologist became enough interested in the ruins of Khirbet Qumran, and especially its cemetery, to open a few graves but he learned nothing of significance, for the graves contained no additional objects with the bones.

The modern story begins in the early summer of 1947, and again by that accident that we call serendipity. Two shepherds looking for a lost goat that had strayed up the hillside noticed a hole in the rock face. One of them threw a stone in the hole and heard it break something. Next day they came back and found that the hole led to an extensive cave. In it were some large jars, in one of which they found some manuscripts, which they showed at Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

From then on the story unfolds in a weird manner. As the director of the Jordan Department of Antiquities has written, "It is remarkable how often really great discoveries, particularly of documents, are made by people who have no idea what they have found. . . . The material is carried about from pillar to post, shown to anyone who could not possibly know anything about it, and ultimately bought for a very small sum as a speculation. It is not until the material has been seriously diminished by frequent incompetent handling that it reaches the hands of a person who can appreciate its true value."

Altogether eight rather complete manuscripts were recovered from this first cave, and before long some of them were seen by competent persons in Jerusalem, some by Professor Sukenik of the Hebrew University in November and others by our own staff at the American Schools of Oriental Research in February. To add to the excitement the end of the British mandate and the subsequent turmoil in Palestine fell at just this juncture.

The value of the manuscripts was soon suspected by archaeologists and bedouin alike and now repeated visits were made by both parties to scour the area. The authorities, in contrast to both groups, have no rule that "finding is keeping." They require that objects of archaeological interest be reported to them. So they turned the situation into "a game of cops and robbers" and finally, with the co-operation of scholars, into orderly and systematic investigation, preservation, and study. Several other caves among the many found in this area contained written fragments—one of them fragments of over 300 scrolls and another a double scroll of bronze which, like one of the first eight, still awaits decipherment because simple unrolling has proved unsafe or impossible. The fragments are being cleaned, sorted, arranged and deciphered by an international team of scholars at the Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile after considerable debate much of the above story has become by now generally accepted, the date of the settlement and of its records, its similarity if not identity with the Essenes on the one hand and with the Zadokite sect of the Cairo Genizah. Further publication of fragments, and discussion and reconsideration of the data already available will continue. The scholarly literature about them is already enormous. Some new facts may emerge but more old ones will be confirmed. Instead of listing the finds in more detail it may be profitable to consider their bearing on a few definite topics.

The *Old Testament* has been known to us in Hebrew manuscripts none of them more than a thousand years old. The Bible manuscripts from Qumran are about a thousand years older, mostly written on the spot during the community's existence in the two centuries before 70 A.D. and some few perhaps even older. They agree substantially with the standard (Masoretic) Hebrew text very often, but they also often vary from it. These variants often agree with the Greek translation of the Bible books made not much earlier. Students of the Old Testament in editing or translating its text often have had to choose between following the Hebrew or preferring what the Greek translators may be supposed to have read. The latter preference is shown by these manuscripts often to have justification. For example the supposed superiority of the Greek in frequent passages in the Book of Samuel is now extensively confirmed by the Hebrew fragments of that book from the caves. In some other books as in Isaiah the old Hebrew differs less from the standard Hebrew and agrees less against it with the Greek. One complete manuscript of Isaiah shows that in the time of Christ that book contained all the sections of our familiar book. If any of them are additions to the original parts of the book, as chapters 24-27, 36-39, 40-66 probably are, they had been already added. On the other hand, scholars have long considered Habakkuk to have once contained only the first two of its three chapters. The commentary on the book from Qumran is based on such a briefer form of the prophet. It is said that every Old Testament book is represented by at least one manu-

script. Those represented by the most manuscripts are Deuteronomy, Psalms and Isaiah.

Apocryphal books are also represented in the finds, showing that while the sect used all our Old Testament writings it did not confine itself to these, as the later Jewish canon did. Of these additional books some have been known to us before but only in translations into Greek and through Greek into other languages. These fragments are all in the Hebrew or Aramaic original, as of Tobit, Enoch, Jubilees, and the Testament of Levi. One can infer less about other books represented because they are unfamiliar.

The *sect* is illuminated by its books. One sees its intense interest in scripture and its tastes in reading. The books it cherished are many of them apocalyptic but it is definitely Old Testament centered. There are many scrolls that are what we would call commentaries in the sense that they interpret the Old Testament text of Zephaniah, or Habakkuk, or Micah, or the Psalms to apply to the beliefs or historical experiences of the sect itself. There is at least one fragment that is a collection of Old Testament passages (Deut. 18:18; 5:28-29, Num. 24: 15-17, Deut. 33:8-11) usable as predictions of the Messiah, or rather of what the sect expected: "The prophet and the (two) Messiahs of Aaron and of Israel."

Fortunately much the majority of the scrolls including some of the better-preserved manuscripts are not of Biblical or kindred material that is familiar to us but are quite new and more directly indicate the constitution and religious practices of the community. One of these, often called by a modern term "Manual of Discipline," deals with the separateness of the community, its purifications and dedication to the "covenant," its terms of admission including renunciation of private property but not of marriage, its rules and the penalties for their infringement, and much more, including its organization and officers, the worship, liturgical formulas and hymns, benedictions and prayers. There are elsewhere hymns, allegorical or symbolical narratives, and perhaps some history hidden under symbolism.

Of *Judaism* these discoveries widen our knowledge by giving us further and confirmatory knowledge of a single but small group. If, as reported, the Essenes numbered only three or four thousands, this group must have been as large as any of their single communities. Quantitatively they are not important but as an extreme and distinctive phenomenon in Judaism they are of interest. Like more central parts of Jewry they are strictly Jewish. Their righteousness if anything exceeded that of other Jews. Their variation from whatever was normative in Jewish practice was not combined with any theological variation. They showed respect for the law and the rest of the Old Testament and for the priesthood. The recent finds only confirm the impression of Judaism's unity in the time of Jesus, together with its extraordinary tolerance of variety.

Christianity is not represented in the discovery. No New Testament documents were in the library of the sect; in fact there was scarcely time for them to get there. Their own documents do not mention Christians and, though earlier in origin, probably they did not affect Christianity. It is as parallel but independent movements that the two may be compared.

Christianity also began as a Jewish sect. Its forerunner baptized in the same Jordan Valley. Its adherents also were called to a more radical commitment. Christians also searched the scriptures and found in them anticipations of their own experience and history. For them also Deuteronomy, Isaiah and the Psalms were favorites. Their original writings were strongly affected by the phraseology of the older scriptures—in ritual, in hymn writing, and in ethical exhortation. Some Christians used the words faith, truth, righteousness, Holy Spirit, covenant, light and darkness, as did these sectaries. But there are few if any verbal coincidences which are striking. Any identity of phrase is best explained by common Biblical or Jewish background. The Christians and the Essenes expected a man of lies (or sin) as well as a teacher of righteousness, a prophet, one or more Messiahs. Whether these were, for the Essenes, future or past, or as in the case of the Christian Messiah, both past and future, is not now evident.

The differences between the groups are not to be minimized. The Essenes, Josephus says, are bound together more closely than the other Jewish sects and, we may add, than the Christians also. For its earlier life Christianity had no such definite rules of admission, no such formal services, liturgy, officialdom or discipline as the old writers assign to the Essenes and the new texts disclose. Apparently the Essenes were more ascetic, more fanatic, more ritualistic, more warlike than the early Christians.

The discoveries give us therefore more light on the background than they do on the sources of Christianity. They confirm the predominantly Jewish character of the careers of John the Baptist, Jesus and the early Christians. Christianity has as much in common with the central core of Judaism as it has with these sectaries. We have known, or should have known, this Jewish character of the church well enough. If it has been ignored it was because of a desire to stress the difference. Just as Jesus told his con-

temporaries that if men would not believe Moses and the prophets neither would they believe if one rose from the dead, so with us today. We have always had plenty of evidence of the Jewish character of Christianity, and if we are reminded of it by these recoveries, as it were, from the dead, probably those who have not believed before will not believe now either. We need not seek for Christianity special links with this sect. New Testament teaching has some similarity. For example the Essenes are said to forbid oaths. Compare Matthew and James. But at other points the teaching of Jesus seems like that of John, or Rabbi Hillel, or Rabbi Akiba, or the Pharisees, or even of the Sadducees.

I may conclude with an illustration from the Christian sacraments. Scholars are already making vague suggestions of their dependence on the ceremonial washings and community meals of the sect, though the former were apparently recurrent rather than initiatory baptism, and the latter are still but little known to us. Meanwhile in the last fifty years it has become increasingly acknowledged that nonschismatic Judaism of the time regularly required baptism of proselytes, and that it abounded in solemn fellowship meals of intimate associates.

Though we may seek our Christian origins mainly in other than Essene Judaism, these discoveries are striking and important enough to deserve our objective study of them and their incorporation into our knowledge of the Jewish-Christian tradition.

SHALL WE KEEP THE CHRISTIAN YEAR?

Charles C. Forman

No small interest is currently being shown in non-liturgical Protestant circles—liberal and orthodox alike—in a re-examination of the Christian Year. It is a fair question to put, then, as to whether the Calendar of the Church should rightfully remain the exclusive possession of Christians standing in the Catholic tradition, and those Reformed branches of the Church which have preserved liturgical forms. Let us attempt an answer to that question by recalling the historical origins of the Church Year, the pattern it perpetuates and the values inherent in its observance.

The origins of the Christian Calendar are to be found in the era of the early Church. The embryo from which the Calendar developed has its first traces in the Book of Acts and in the Pauline Epistles. There one finds the first Christians observing the Sabbath—their inheritance from Judaism and the time of the Gospels—and the Lord's Day when they commemorated the Resurrection and re-enacted the Last Supper. From these first beginnings the Church Year developed; a process of gradually building up the number of observances and of cutting back the growth as certain days came to have special significance while others ceased to be meaningful. There was thus a conscious effort to adjust the Calendar to the needs of the devotional life of the Christian community. By the Fourth Century the main features of the Christian Year, as we now know it, were in evidence. The framework of the Calendar consisted of Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. To this skeletal calendar other days were added and from it certain days have been dropped down to the present time.

In the time of the Protestant Reformation, characterized by an excessive interest in, and a re-discovery of the Bible, there was an effort to restrict the Church Calendar to those observances having a biblical basis. Nevertheless, both Luther and Zwingli showed an interest in the Church Year; liturgical and seasonal observances were not completely rejected by them. The Genevese reformers alone restricted the Calendar to an observance of Sunday only. Their influence was felt upon Scotch and English reform movements through Knox, and within a century English Separatists went all the way in abandoning the Church Year. Thus, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican traditions have preserved the Calendar of the Church in their common usage while those Protestant bodies descended from movements of Separatism and Independence—the prevailing influence in American church life—have, for the most part, lost the pattern of the Christian Calendar.

In any time of protest there is a constant danger that something of great worth will be lost, a danger our spiritual forefathers did not completely escape. Many gracious Christian forms were discarded in just such a spirit of protest to the impoverishment of our devotional life. In any case, the practice of religion cannot be carried on and transmitted to successive generations without some form for its substance. No matter how strong the impulse toward simplicity, new forms for religious expression and observance are created as surely as old forms are discarded. Even the Quakers have made a ceremony of silence and, in rejecting all symbols in favor of the plainness of the meeting house, have created a new symbol. The Pilgrims began

with a rejection of the Church Year and ended by bequeathing to that Calendar another day—Thanksgiving! The meeting house, be it Quaker or Puritan, is quite as much a symbol of religious feeling as is any Gothic cathedral. Puritanical fear of symbolism and distrust of form notwithstanding, it is impossible to separate form from content in religion even though the distinction between the two must at all times be clear and certain.

The value of keeping the Christian Year as a tool of religious expression is evident enough when we realize how hopelessly short human memory is. The Calendar reminds us where men have been and what they have discovered as eternally worthwhile in their spiritual pilgrimage. As George M. Gibson has observed, a long range view of religion "redeems man from his bent to contemporaneity." (*The Story of the Chistian Year*, p.33.) Liberal Christians and Jews tend to look upon the high period of the prophetic movement as the golden age of Old Testament religion. In doing this they tend to underestimate the significant role played by the parallel priestly movement. It should not be forgotten that the acute moral conscience of the Hebrew prophets could never have been preserved as a vital influence upon both Judaism and Christianity had it not been for the framework erected by the priestly movement. Prophetic insight was safeguarded and transmitted within the priestly pattern.

There are four regulating principles which govern the Christian Year: reiteration, appropriateness, separation and preparation. The first, reiteration, takes as its premise the view that the sustenance of the religious life is dependent upon repetition. This principle firmly contradicts the notion that there is serious danger in making of Christianity a "one day affair." To argue that every day should be regarded as "a holy day" is all too often to admit that there are no longer any holy days. A perpetual Sabbath is a difficult concept to put into daily practice. A succession of single days in the Church Year are, therefore, designated to call us back to the well-springs of inspiration. Without these reminders coming to us at stated intervals there is grave danger that we soon forget the sources of our Christian faith, or, at the least, disrupt the essential balance between devotion and action.

Appropriateness, the second principle of the Church Calendar, serves as a reminder that there "is a time and a place" for every occasion. This is one of the sorely neded emphases in the free church tradition if we are to be rescued from the danger of the crudity that has too often been the fruit of that informalism dominating American religious practice. Spontaneity has its rightful place in religious expression and the loss of it would be an impoverishment. But orderliness has its place, too. A sermon on social action for Palm Sunday, using Christmas as an opportunity for discussing comparative religions, or making Easter an occasion for giving a much-needed lecture on New Testament textual criticism does violence to the principle of appropriateness and constitutes an affront to good taste.

Separation, the third principle, has been repeatedly misunderstood by Protestants. Part of the failure for discerning the values underlying this principle, the failure to distinguish between "things sacred and things profane," arises from an overcautious awareness of the evils which result when religion and the world become alienated. Separation and identification alike contain moral dangers when they are carried to their extremes. Nevertheless, there are things belonging to Caesar and things belonging to God. Religion must forever be in the world; it must never be of it. When it becomes identified too closely with the world it sacrifices its ability to exercise moral criticism and is no longer able to apply necessary correctives to society.

The fourth principle governing the Church Year is preparation. Our devotional life suffers most severely in liberal circles because we have lost sight of the function of discipline in religion. The proper observance of a religious celebration depends upon the principle of preparation. The disciplines of penance, confession, and fasting are gone because they have ceased to have merit for most Protestants, but we have not matched the discarded disciplinary forms with other and better disciplines. Too often, therefore, the necessary spiritual, mental and emotional preparation for entering into the mood of receptiveness for any given celebration is wanting. Those of us who have come to use the Lenten manuals in the past few years know how much more readily we have grasped the deeper overtones of the period of preparation leading up to Easter. We have, as it were, not come to that season completely unprepared.

What are the values, then, derived from an observance of the Church Year? We have already mentioned the need of developing a sense of history. From such an historical perspective there comes a kind of balance that safeguards the proper emphasis. This can be seen most clearly in the medieval pattern where the pendulum swings regularly throughout the year between carnivals and fasts, one following the other in steady procession. The importance of this balance should be obvious enough; it is especially significant at this time when several special days of an activistic or social nature such as

Brotherhood Sunday or Race Relations Sunday are being introduced into the Calendar through common Protestant usage.

The Christian Year has recently been described by Randolph Crump Miller with a deal of acuteness as a symphony. The themes of the symphony may be identified easily enough. The symphony opens on a theme of anticipation—it is Advent. During these weeks the emphasis is upon the coming of Jesus and its observance centers upon various aspects of the Christmas story. Then comes Christmas itself and there is rejoicing and celebration as a new era in human history opens. Following the Christmas theme there is a longer, more evenly modulated theme recalling the life of Christ and giving content to the era introduced by his coming. Then comes another theme repeating something of the note of anticipation, but much more profound, as it stresses introspection and tragedy and forboding. As with Advent there is light and shadow, but in Lent they trace not a star but a cross. The period ends with the darkest mood of the entire year for a mighty conflict is being waged between good and evil. Easter breaks the mood of penance and foreboding with a burst of light and song. There is rejoicing on every hand but, like Lent, it is more profound in its emotion than Christmas—the year has matured. From the triumphant note of Easter we move to Pentecost and celebrate the expansion of the Christian church in the world. Then the themes become more diverse and varied as they relate the active work of the church in its many aspects. The year culminates with two holidays of special significance—All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. The first recalls us to the commemoration of the saintly characters who have served the church universal in countless ways, but with a delicately suggestive touch the Calendar leads us on one more day to the recollection of all men and women of good will, those whom the Book of Ecclesiasticus described as "having no memorial" except in the hearts of the faithful. So the Year concludes and prepares to begin again. The Church Year falls into two parts: the first begins with Advent and ends with Easter, and the second is introduced by Pentecost and closes with All Souls' Day. The first half of the year deals with God's revelations to mankind; the second with man's response to that revelation.

As we approach the Advent season this year we are reminded of Ben Sira's insight when he said: "For a man's mind is sometimes wont to bring him tidings more than seven watchmen that sit on high on a watchtower." (Eccus. XXXVII:14) Advent is the season of seeking, searching and surmising as the coming of Jesus Christ is anticipated. His advent comes full of promise and of hope for it is the advent of a perfect man giving himself up to goodness and living his life in the light of faith and in surrender to God. There is hope, too—hope in the realization that Christ our "elder brother" can through his example lead us to that self-discovery which is our salvation.

Such a life is portrayed in the Church's Year, but that is only half the story. The second half is our response to that life. Our response must come in the light of our acquaintance with and discovery of that life. As Schweitzer has put it, "He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old by the lakeside he came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word, 'Follow thou me,' and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the suffering which they shall pass through in his fellowship and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who he is." *(The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 401.)

ON EARTH PEACE, TOWARD MEN GOODWILL
PEACE ON EARTH TOWARD MEN OF GOODWILL

Which is Right?

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." For some reason scholars have hesitated over the translation that makes God's good-will available to all men. Some men do not deserve it. God should show more discrimination. Therefore we have different translations for the phrase "good-will toward men." The Greek text, they say, is ambiguous. The Greek words are perfectly simple until you come to the last one, good-will, eudokia. Some texts have it in the nominative case: "On earth peace, toward men good-will." Some texts have

it in the genitive case: "On earth peace toward men of good-will." It all depends on which reading you prefer, for one is as authoritative as the other. For the King James version the preponderance of scholarly opinion inclined to eudokia: "Good-will toward men," all men, no exceptions. For our modern versions the preponderance of scholarly opinion seems to incline to eudokias: "On earth peace toward men of good-will," but to no others. At this point we hear an eager whisper. It is the Christmas spirit: "Never mind the angels." Some said eudokia, others said eudokias. But let me remind you of what your own poet Robert Frost says about home: "I like to think home is something you don't have to deserve." Is God less generous than your own beloved poet? Once a year, on Christmas Day, can you not think of God's good-will as something that you don't have to deserve, but is free to all, especially to those who most need it?

THE DISCOVERY OF CHRISTMAS

Henry Hallam Saunderson

Long ago, in the land of Israel, the shepherds pastured their flocks on many a hill-top, and looked down into the fertile fields in the valleys, the vineyards on the hillsides, the little villages and the winding roads and paths over which their neighbors travelled. Imagine a hill-top at night, with a silent watcher alert to guard his flock which was huddled together in sleep. The valleys fill with silvery mists, until his hill-top is like a little island in an unbounded sea. But the atmosphere is clear above, and the stars seem strangely near. Through the long hours of the silent night he watches the majestic movements of the heavenly bodies.

The lonely watcher has his reward, for he has discovered the universe. There are no stars except for those who sit in darkness. The light of day calls attention to the things of the earth; but the night reveals the heavens. Many of the most majestic passages in our Bible come from men who, from the hill-tops, watched the stars. Their meditations gave them spiritual insight, and they enriched the religion of men by their declaration of faith.

With the earth submerged in the night, and the glory of the heavens revealed, men gained new faith in God. They saw "the beauty of the Lord," the steadfastness of his will, the patience of his mind, the vastness of his power. The strife and confusion, which beset ordinary life, fell away in such meditation; and peace and harmony were revealed in the heavens. Light and music and joy and hope stirred the hearts of men who, for a few hours of meditation, turned thus from the temporary things to the eternal. Rich was their discovery.

It was to men upon the hill-tops that the Christmas message first came. The music, which was above the discords of the world, came to their ears in the midst of their quiet meditation. The light, which was above the mists of earth, came to their eyes as they gazed upon the stars. These shepherds, on the hills above Bethlehem, heard the message of the birth of a Messiah for the world who, in the later years of his ministry, said, "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

Of old it was said, "They that sit in darkness have seen a great light." Only those who sit in darkness can discover the stars. To them only comes the revelation of the beauty and the order of the universe. For their ears is the message, which they bear to those in the valleys, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will to men." Christmas is a discovery, and its reality is forever waiting for the eyes that can see, the ears that can hear, and the hearts that can respond to the heavenly message.

If in the marketplace, of a village in the land of Israel, a shepherd had told a man of the village about the stars, his story might be received with doubt. But the shepherd could say, "Come up to the hill-top and see with your own eyes." To men today, submerged in material things, the story of the Christian life may seem unreal. But Christmas comes again, and says, "Come up on the higher ground, and try it; put this thing to the test of experience; and see if it works." Christ said, "If any man willeth to do God's will, he shall know." The Christian life answers to man's tests: its truth may be known by experience; and to those who make the great experiment, comes the discovery. Christmas proclaims anew the truth that is in Christ.

THE GOLDEN LINK

A Fable

"This shall be a sign unto you." Gabriel, Archangel and Keeper of the Heavenly Treasure, sat in his office idly toying with his chain of heavenly days, three hundred and sixty-five links of pure gold. He loved to handle it and count the links. This day there were but three hundred and sixty-four. He spoke to his assistant: "One of these links is missing; do you know anything about it?" "Yes," came the reply, "I know all about it. Not long ago you told me to pick out some discreet young angel and send him to earth to announce the birth of Jesus. As he was starting off he said that once before he had been down to that funny little planet and knew how canny and incredulous the people were. He must have some credential, for they would not believe him unless he gave them a sign. So I twisted off one link of your chain of days and gave it to him." Gabriel replied: "I see; but where is it now?" "He left it down there," answered the assistant; "He said they needed it more than you did." Gabriel laughed—"I dare say he was right"—got out his pliers and made another link.

Here on earth we have our chain of days. The links are of all kinds—rusty iron, chrome steel, copper, telephone wire, brass, even picture cord twisted into a loop. But near the end is a single link of solid gold, the one that the angel left. It is still our sign from heaven that "unto us is born this day a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." It has a curious effect on the links next to it; turns them into gold. Perhaps some day it will turn the whole chain into gold.

—Contributed